

These Days

By George Sokolsky

Growth of the Presidency

CPYRCH

THE 86th Congress passed a bill—Public Law 934—"To provide for a President's advisory commission on presidential office space," the need for such a measure arising from the increased authority and the increased functions of the Presidency.



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The direct staff of the President consists of 45 persons, headed by Sherman Adams, whose title is "the assistant to the President." Sherman Adams is aided by "the deputy assistant to the President," Maj. Gen. Wilton B. Persons, USA (ret.). These are aided by two assistants to the deputy assistant to the President. Then, in rank, comes the secretary to the President, Bernard M. Shanley. Then comes the press secretary to the President, James C. Hagerty, and his assistant.

Whether this clearly defines seniority or merely represents the form of listing, is difficult to say. Harold Stassen, for instance, is fairly down the line with the formal title of "special assistant to the President."

THERE IS AN altogether new officer in the White House, namely, a secretary to the Cabinet. Prior to this Administration, the Cabinet was a council of the President's principal aids, agreeing or disagreeing with the President and with each other in privacy.

This is now changed. An agenda is drawn up for the meeting and others than Cabinet members are called in for special reasons. The National Security Council has taken some of the authority of the Cabinet, but also has

an executive secretary who reports to the special assistant to the President for national security affairs.

There is another agency, the Operations Coordinating Board, which is a sort of junior Cabinet, consisting of the Under Secretary of State, the Deputy Secretary of Defense, the director of Central Intelligence, director of United States Information Agency, and a representative of the President. The purpose of this agency is to provide for "the integrated implementation of national security policies by the several agencies."

The growth of the President's functions has not taken place in one term. It has been continuous over a period of years and has placed upon the President enormous managerial burdens in addition to his responsibilities under the Constitution. Because of his Army experience, President Eisenhower has been able to organize on a kind of general staff

basis with Sherman Adams as his chief of staff.

THIS HAS raised certain practical political problems, particularly with Congress, the more important and influential members of Congress declining to deal with the President through an intermediary, a method of communication to which they are not accustomed. This has been solved by the holding of stated conferences with the congressional leaders.

Because of the effectiveness of this type of organization, the President's illness did not interfere with the business of the country, the White House staff continuing to function as though he were well.

It is because of this experience that the office of Vice President has emerged to more than it has usually been in American history. In these circumstances, Vice President Richard Nixon presided over the Cabinet and over the National Security Council but he did not assume administrative functions in the White House. Those were handled by Sherman Adams and his staff as usual. Anything can get sick and anything can happen during a sickness. From the standpoint of continuity of managerial operations, the current method seems well devised.